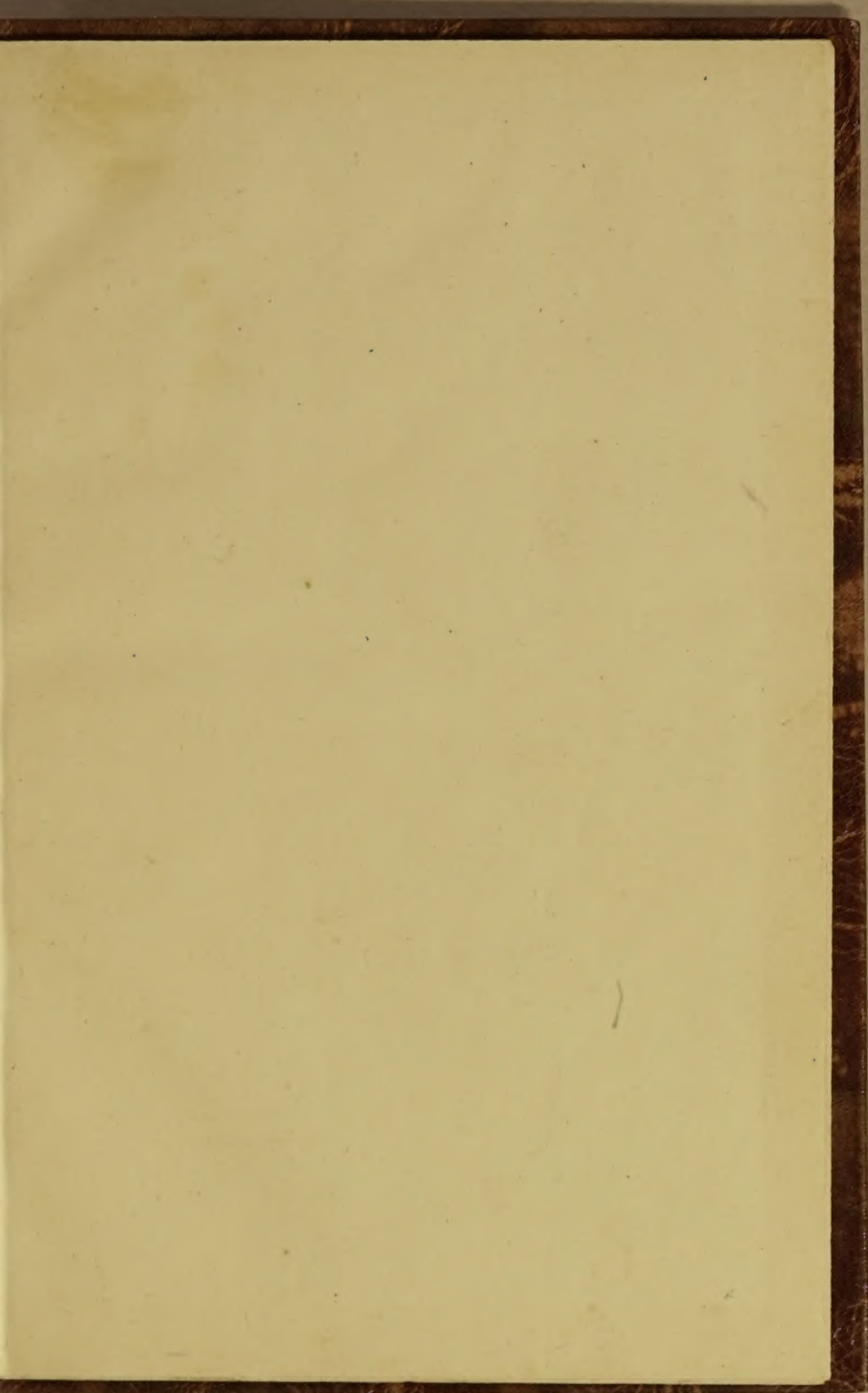
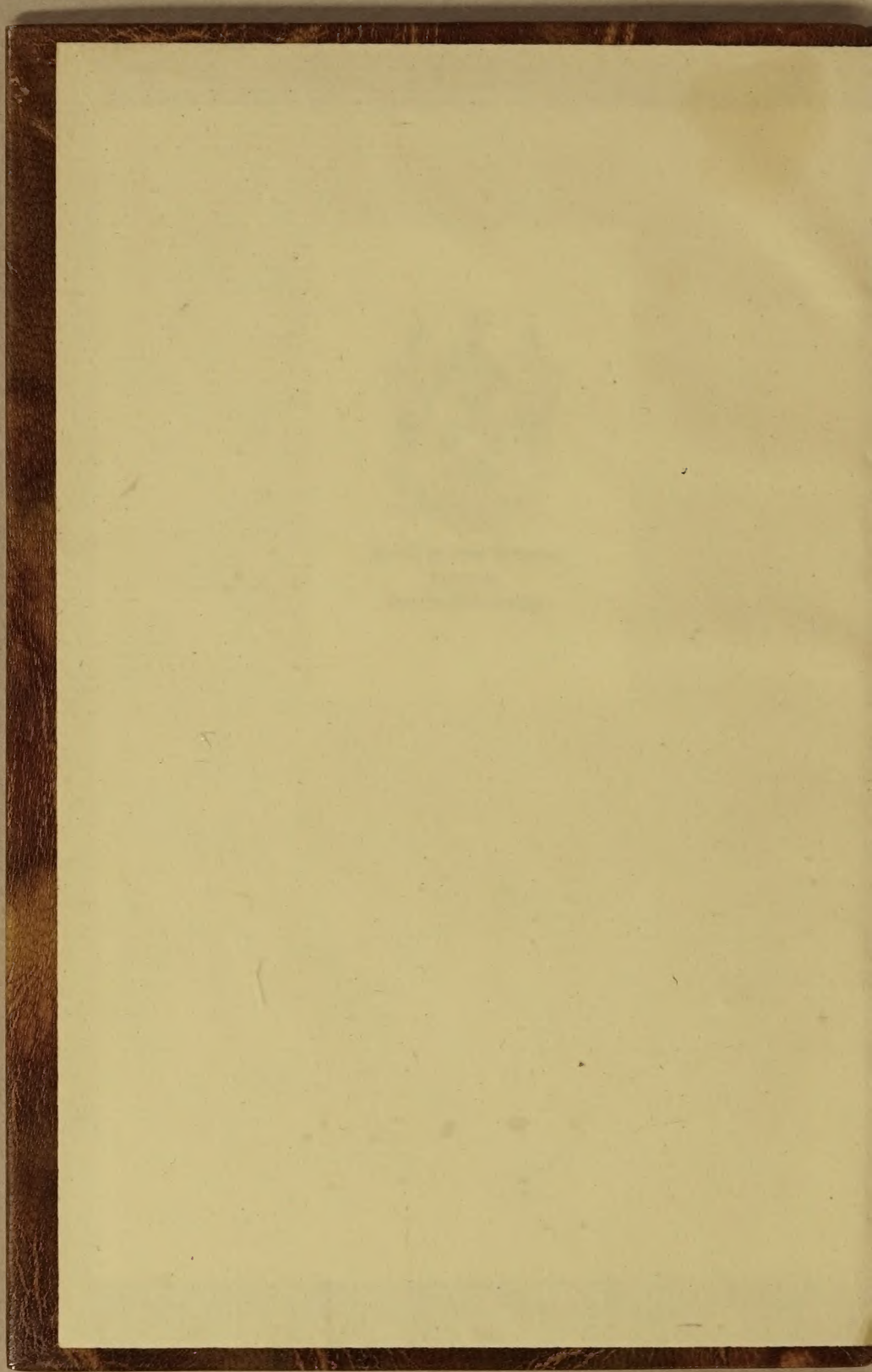


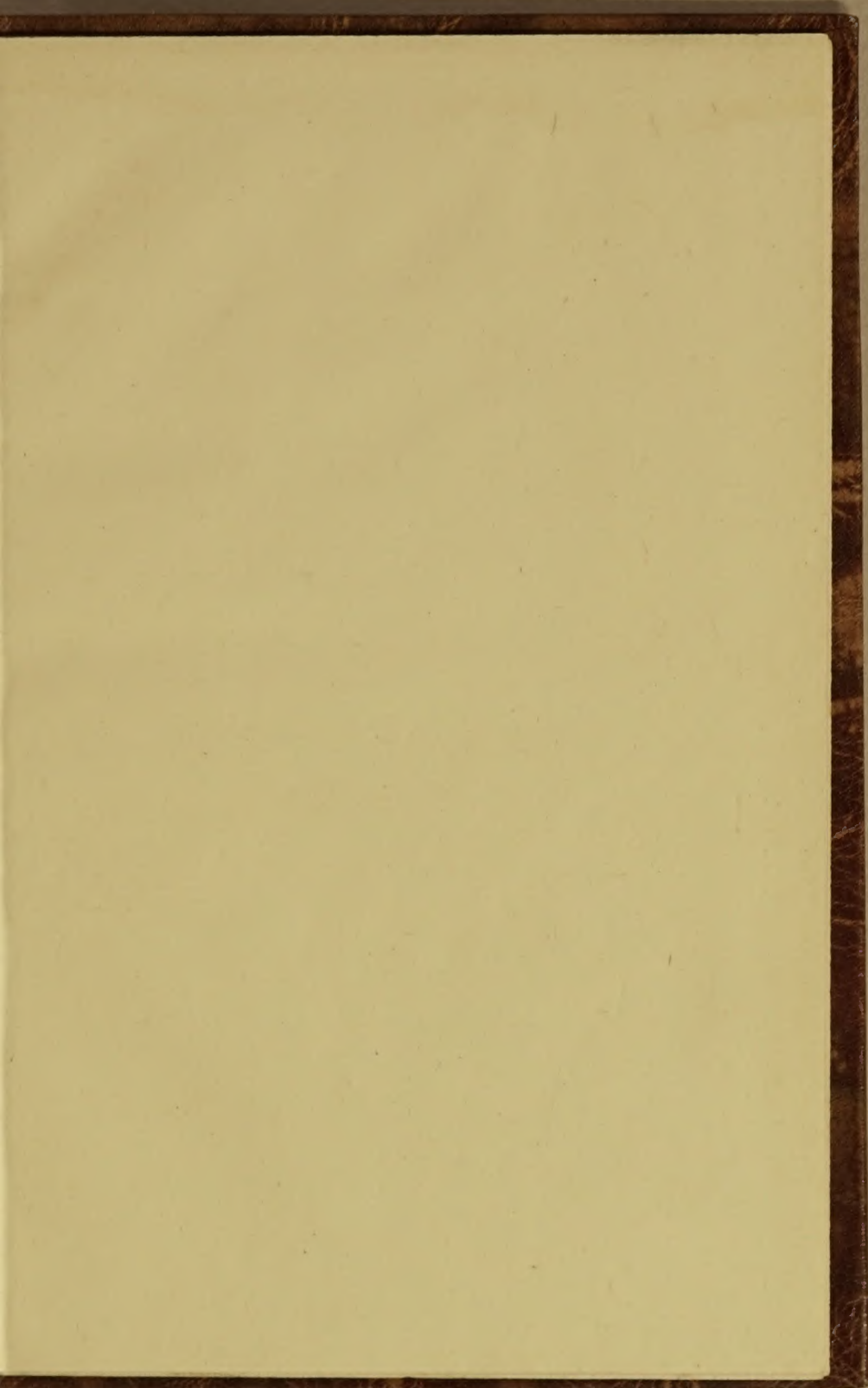


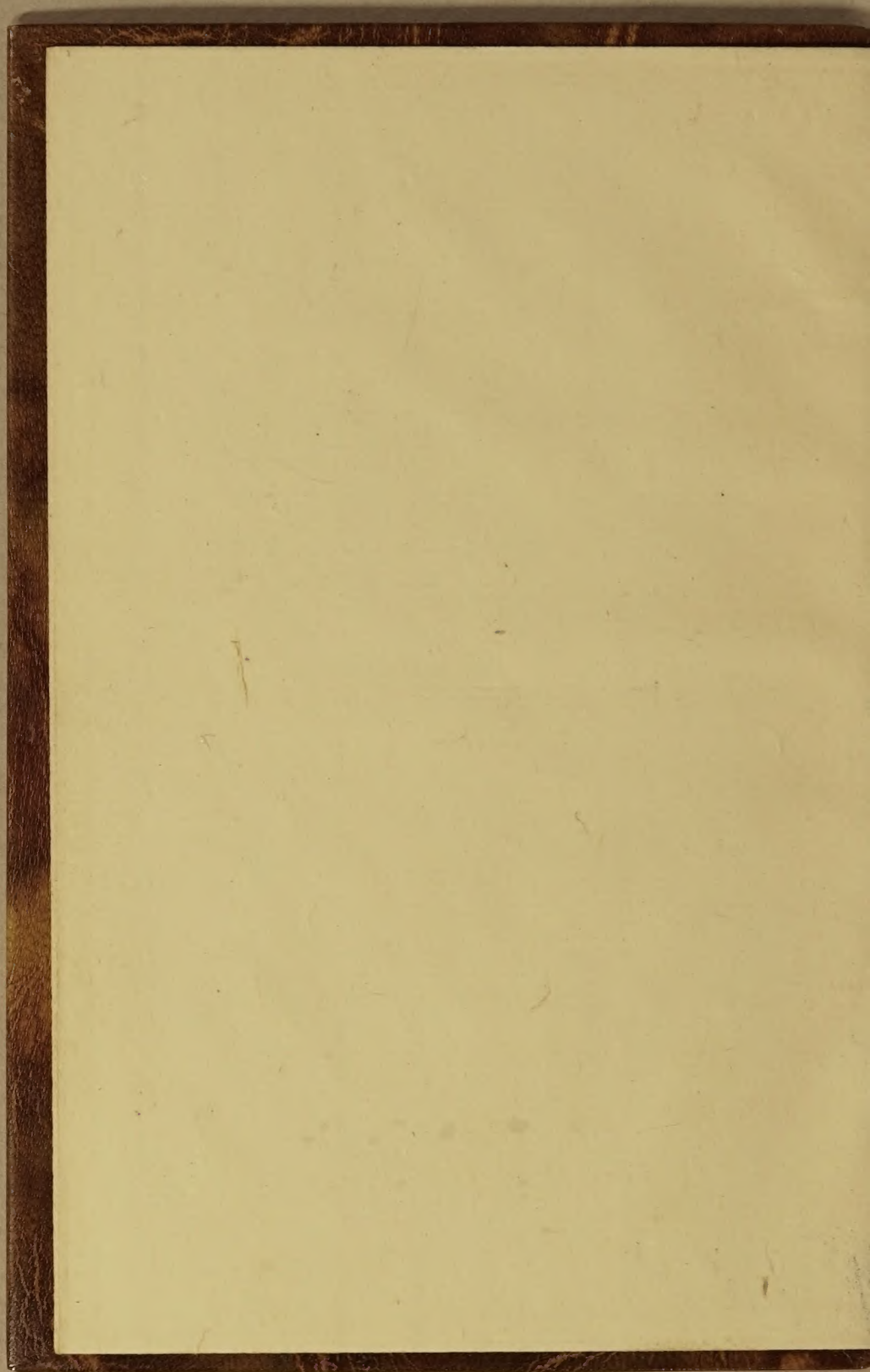


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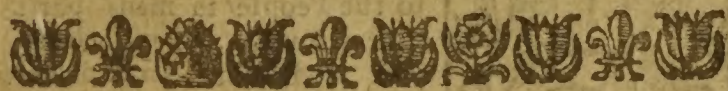
LETTER

To a Certain

Gentleman, &c.

B O S T O N :

Printed by *J. Franklin*, for *Daniel Henchman*, and
sold at his Shop, over against the Brick-Meet-
ing-House. 1719.





A
LETTER
 TO A
Certain GENTLEMAN
 desiring a particular Account
 may be given of a wonderful
Meteor, that appeared in *New-*
England, on *Decemb. 11. 1719.*
 in the Evening.

S I R,



Understand by a Friend of mine, You desire my thoughts of the late appearance in the Heavens, which was amazing to the People in many parts of the Country. I will therefore endeavour to answer your desire; and that (i.e.) By giving an account of it according as I observed it, and according to what I can learn from others. And then, By telling you what

what may in all probability be looked upon to be the Natural Cause thereof. And I hope, (tho' I believe I shall differ from some) I shall say nothing that shall be inconsistent either with *Divinity* or *Philosophy*.

I. For the Account of it, &c. take in the following Words:

Dec. 11. 1719. This Evening about Eight a-Clock, there arose a *bright red Light* in the E. N. E. like the Light which arises from an house when on fire, (as I am told by several credible Persons who saw it when it first arose) which soon spread itself thro' the *Heavens* from *East* to *West*, reaching about 43 or 44 deg. in height, and was unequally broad: It streamed with white Flashes or Streams of Light down to the Horizon (as most tell me) very bright & strong. When I first saw it, which was when it had extended itself over the Horizon from E. to W. it was brightest in the middle, which was from me N. W.; and I could resemble it to nothing but the Light of some Fire: I could plainly see Streams of Light redder than ordinary, and there seemed to me to be an undulating motion of the whole Light; so thin was this Light, as that I could see the Stars very plainly thro' it. Below this Stream or Glade of Light, there lay in the Horizon, some thick Clouds (which a few hours after, arose and covered the Heavens) bright on the Tops or Edges. It lasted somewhat more than an Hour, tho' the height of its red colour continued but a few Minutes. About Eleven the same Night the same Appearance was visible again; but the Clouds hindered its being

being so accurately observed as I could wish for. Its appearance was now somewhat dreadful; sometimes it looked of a Flame, sometimes a blood red colour; and the whole N. E. Horizon was very light, and looked as though the Moon had been near her rising. The dreadfulneſs as well as ſtrangenefs of this Appearance, made me think of Mr. *WATTS*'s Description of the Day of Judgment in English Sapphic.

*When the fierce North Wind with his airy Forces
Rears up the Baltick to a foaming fury,
And the red Lightning with a Storm of Hail comes
Rushing amain down, &c.*

And of these lines in *Flatman*.

*When from the Dungeon of the Grave
The meagre Throng themselves shall heave,
Shake off their linen Chains, and gaze
With wonder when the World shall blaze.*

About an hour or two before break of day the next morning it was ſeen again, as I am informed; and thoſe who ſaw it, ſay it was then the moſt terrible. I ſaw it but twice, for the heavens being ſo overcaſt, diſcouraged me from ſitting up longer than my uſual time.

This *Meteor* was ſeen in many places: To thoſe S. from us it appeared lower in the Horizon, and therefore to the more ſouthern places muſt be wholly inviſible. Thus I have given you the beſt Account I am able of this *Meteor*; which tho' very unuſual here, yet in Nothern countries more frequent,

quent, and seems to me to be what our Modern Philosophers call *Aurora Borealis*. Now, Sir, as for the Next thing which is my tho'ts on this Meteor, you shall have them in the following words.

II. It is well known to all (tho'-but a little read in Philosophy) that there is abundance of Nitro-Sulphureous Particles exhaled or forced out of the Earth continually, but most of all in Summer days ; which is the reason why we have Thunder more then than in the Winter. Now for 2. or 3 days before this Appearance, we had hot weather for the time of year, and very hot indeed the day immediately preceeding, as hot as we commonly have in September, and the air was so warm as that I can almost call it Sultry hot : Now I believe there was a very great quantity of such Particles exhaled or forced out of the Earth in this hot weather, and this evening were fired ; which because fire in such inflamable matter moves very quick, was the cause of the quick motion of this Light from the East to the West, tho' not contrary to the wind, yet across it ; for the wind was then North, You'll now ask me how it came to pass that there were such Exhalations more now than at another time. To which I answer, I believe they were occasioned by some Subterraneous heat*, That there are subterraneous fires is received by all Philosophers, and demonstrable from those Igneous Eruptions that are in many places ; which fires are the causes of dreadful Earthquakes which

* Dr. Wallis ascribes the ascent of Vapours to subterraneous Heats. *Phil. Transf. Abr.* p. 123.

have

have sometimes occasioned the rise of Mountains, and of Land even out of the water it self†. And even in watry Countries (now ours is a well watered Country) there are Pitts and wells out of which arise such sulphureous Steams, as that if you hold a candle over 'em, they will immediately flame (much of the Nature I suppose they are of Spirits of Wine Camphorated) insomuch that whole houses have been consumed hereby. [See the late excellent Treatise called, the *Religious Philosopher* Vol. 2.] And Possibly there may be such in our Country, which perhaps may occasion the sudden alteration of weather we are so Subject to:

To all this I add, That tho' in the Summer time we have more hot weather, and so more Vapours are without doubt exhaled; yet whenever the Weather is what we call sultry hot, we commonly have much Thunder and Lightning, or a good deal of Rain; and so the Matter which occasions such *Meteors* is consumed in Thunder and Lightning, or is mixed with the Particles of Water, and so descends to the earth again; and I am confirmed in this Opinion, in that (as the Chymists say) from Rain-water may be distilled a burning Spirit.

Now if you ask me, Why this *Meteor* appeared in the N. E. & so to the N. W. ? I answer, The Exhalations were driven there by the S. W. Winds the day before; and ascending above, even to the upper Region of the Air, were not touched by the N. W. Winds which blew the Day preceeding the Evening on which this *Meteor* appeared.

† See Dr. *Hook's* Discourse of Earthquakes, and Mr. *Boys* Physico-Theo. Discourses.

There remains a difficulty or two more yet to be solved, viz. How it came to be fired? And, Why it appeared more than once?

To the first, I say, It may be fired by what the Philosphers of old called the *Antiperistasis* of the Air, i. e. This inflamable Matter meeting with something of a contrary Nature to it, was by the contest between them put into a Flame; For Experience shows, that if we take Niter, Brimstone and Quick Lime, mix them, and put them into an Egg-shell, as soon as they touch the Water they will fly out in an actual Flame, and such is the Nature of an Accid and an Alkali, as that the Contest between them will heat the Plate or Vessel in which you endeavour to satiate them, as I have several times experienced; Now according to Philosophy where there is heat there is fire. Or if it was not thus, as has been already explained, I don't see why some fiery Vapour or other might not be driven out of the Earth or Sea, & so in its Ascent meet with and give fire to this combustibile Matter.

As to its appearing more than once, the reason is the same as is given for the Repetition of the Flashes of Lightning.

As for the redness of its Colour, I take it to be nothing but the more thick or gross Particles that might be mixed with this inflamable Matter: And as for the white Streams of Light, they were made by the more fine spirituous Particles; and that this is very probable, may be argued from the quickness of their motion, as well as their issuing down to the Horizon, opposite to the Place from whence the *Meteor* first arose (as most tell me they did, and I am apt from the Nature of the thing to believe it was so.) And

And this I shall take to be the true Solution of this wonderfull Appearance, 'till somebody will give me, or I can find, a better.

As to Prognostications from it, I utterly abhor and detest 'em all, and look upon these to be but the Effect of Ignorance and Fancy; for I have not so learned Philosophy or Divinity, as to be dismayed at the Signs of Heaven; this would be to act the Part of an Heathen not of a Christian Philosopher. See *Jer.* 10. 2. And here I would intreat you to take me right, for I don't mean that this Sight was not surprizing to me, for I have said it was before, but I only mean that no Man should fright himself by supposing that dreadful things will follow, such as Famine, Sword or Sicknes; Nor would I be understood to imagine, that there will not be fearful Sight in the Heavens before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Thus, good Sir, I have, as well as I could, given you an account of that unusual *Meteor*, together with my tho'ts upon it. If it is acceptable to you, I shall heartily rejoyce, and allow you to expose it as you please, only concealing my Name; hoping what I have said may serve in some measure to illustrate the works of Nature, which all they who have Pleasure therein will inquire into, that so they may be excited to love, honour, and adore the GOD thereof; to whom be Glory for ever. *A M E N.*

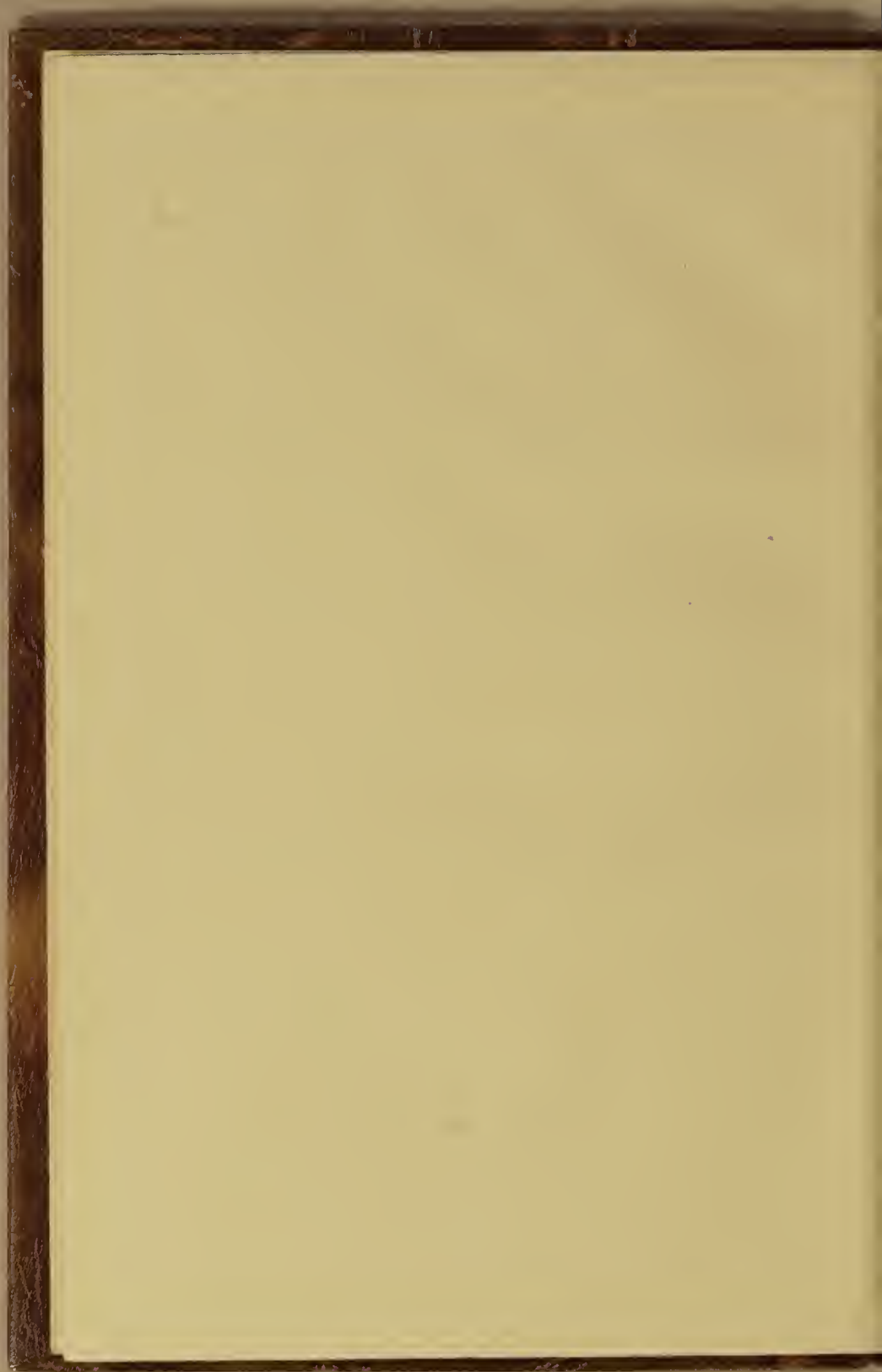
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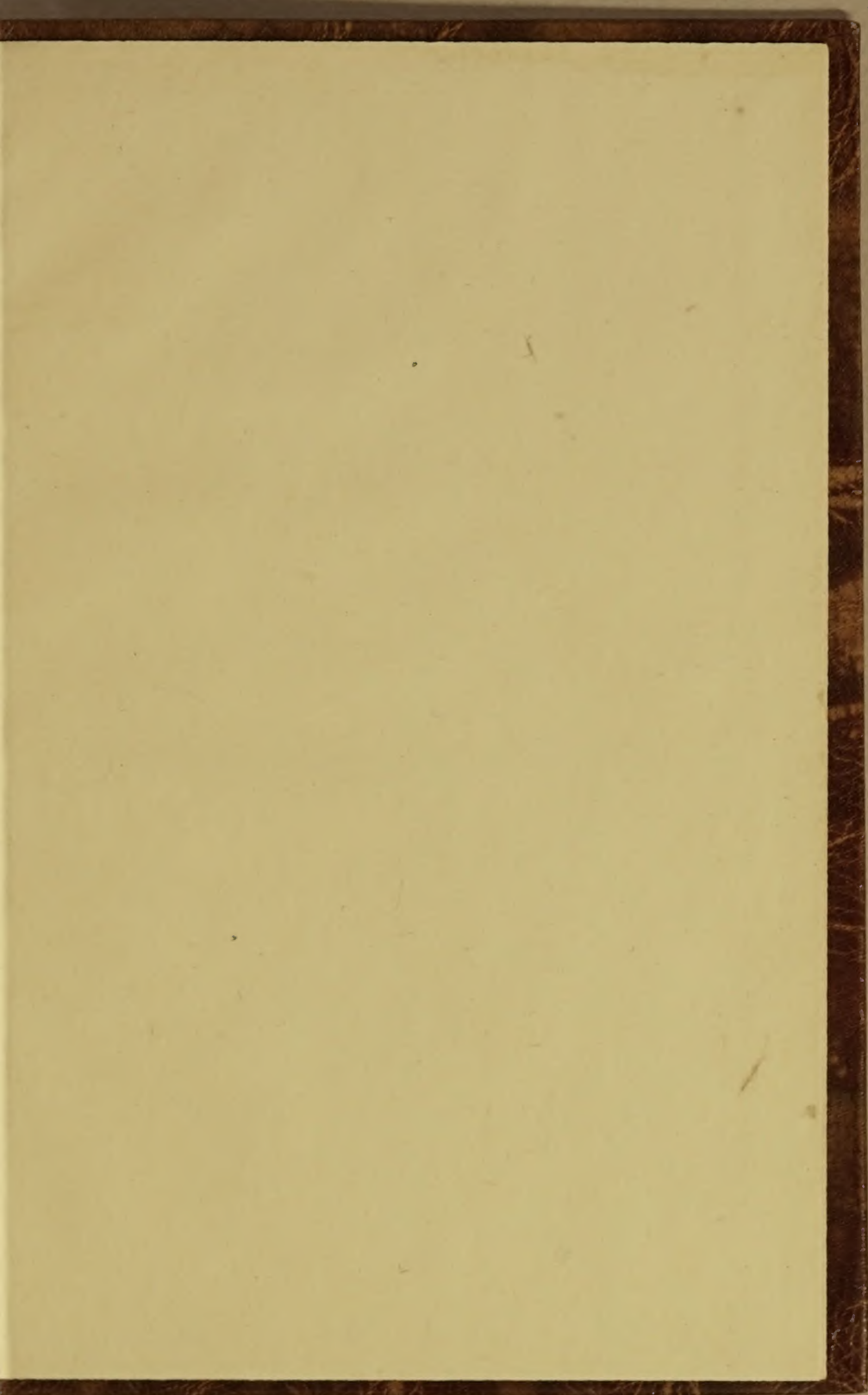
I am, Sir,

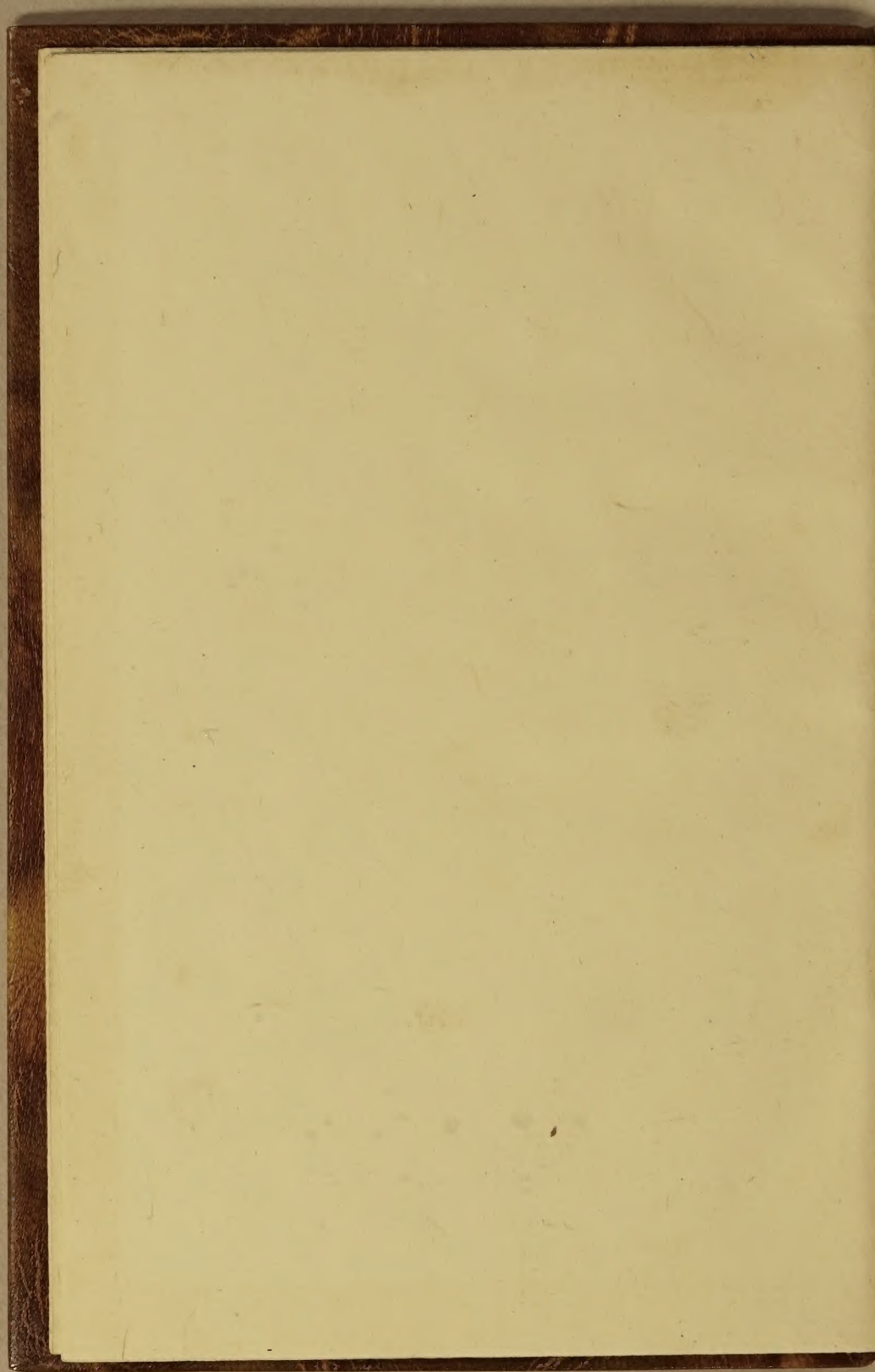
Anno, 1719.

Your very Humble Servant,

ΦΙΛΟΣ ΣΟΦΙΑΣ







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